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BIG BROWN EYES IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

HOW TO OBTAIN THE BULLETIN

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Prague: The Hub of Europe's Airways

PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia's capital, is to be a new kind of center—the airway center of central Europe.

Originally Prague was a center of learning, then of religious controversy, both oral and military, more recently it was a railroad hub, and now it is the junction for airways radiating to Paris, Warsaw, Berlin, and southeastward to Budapest, Belgrade and Bucharest.

Ink on France's recent treaty of recognition of the Soviet Republic was scarcely dry before an announcement predicted the early flight of the first regular Paris-Moscow airplane express. This service to the new Russian capital probably will be an extension of the Paris-Warsaw route and, of course, will pass through Prague.

Starting the Thirty Years' War

To stand at one bank of the Moldau and scan the stately Gothic towers of Charles Bridge, with the grim and barracks-like Hradcany Palace beyond and an airplane above, affords a strange mixture of the medieval and modern.

The white and black towers on the hill recall that the wall was thrown up by Ottakar, Bohemia's Alfred the Great, more than six centuries ago, and there he assigned ten knights and 300 armed men always to be on guard.

Then the memory clicks forward to the time when Frederick, son-in-law of James I, of Bible version fame, brought his English wife there and the methodical Bohemian ladies whispered behind their fans that the alien queen had no settled hours either for her meals or her prayers.

Then, too, the fateful time when the delegation from the Estates marched up to the palace, pitched two royal officials out of the window and inadvertently started the Thirty Years' War—as casual an act as that of the fanatic young Serb who fired the most disastrous shot in history at Serajevo in 1914.

The Yankee-Land of Europe

But one must not linger too long with recollections if he is to see Prague, and catch the Paris airplane!

After the war when Czechoslovakia's trademark began to appear on the matches, toys and glassware we bought in Main Street department stores, the country won the nickname of the Yankee-land of Europe.

A stroll around Prague's historic shrines emphasizes the peculiar facility Bohemia had for keeping ahead of time—even in her history. Everybody recalls that John Huss fostered a Reformation in Bohemia a century before Martin Luther crystallized the movement in Germany. But even before Huss one finds Conrad Waldhauser preaching sermons denouncing luxury and extravagance—sermons of a kind that are being preached in New York and Jones' Crossing to-day.

This Billy Sunday of the thirteen-sixties crowded the Tyn Church, which still stands, and he persuaded women to discard jewelry and to give up their gold-trimmed gowns, and pearl necklaces.

But the most amazing modern touch about the annals of Prague, perhaps, are the records of how King Wenceslaus engaged in retail price fixing. He would

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A LUXURIOUS VANILLA VINE IN MEXICO

At first glance, the long fleshy pods look like leaves. The east coast regions of Papantla and Misantla, Mexico, send much vanilla to the United States. The vanilla vine is an orchid and so complicated is its method of pollination that on plantations transfer of pollen from stamen to pistil is usually performed by skilled employees (see Bulletin No. 3).

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The Seychelles' Exile Industry Declining

THE Seychelles are losing their most famous exiles.

First there was Zaghloul Pasha, who departed to become premier of Egypt. Now Prempeh, last king of the Ashantis, is leaving the Seychelles. Prempeh is not returning to his forest capital as a ruler. He goes as a private citizen.

Entertaining royal exiles is an incident in the annals of St. Helena and Madeira; it became an industry in the Seychelles Islands. Prempeh, one of the first African rulers assigned to peaceful vacations in the Seychelles, was joined by the monarchs of Uganda and Unyoro, who were exiled for their activities with mutinous native troops.

Exiles and Coral and Coconuts

Besides exiles, the Seychelles are noteworthy for coral and coconuts. Approaching vessels steam through coral reefs to reach Port Victoria, chief town of the group on the main island, Mahe. And the town itself lies glistening in the sun like a city of marble, for coral rocks are used in building the neat, compact houses.

Coconut products form the principal commodity of export, but the coconut which made the island famous is the coco-de-mer, which weighs forty pounds or so, requires seven years to ripen, and grows on trees that take thirty-five years to bear leaves. This "coconut of the sea" was known before the islands were discovered, because the great double coconuts were cast up by the waves upon the shores of East Africa. They were believed to be of submarine origin and the native medicine men made much of them.

The Seychelles are the island gems of the Indian Ocean; an early British resident nicknamed them an Oceanic Garden of Eden. There are thirty or more of them, depending upon whether one cares to enumerate as islands small reefs and rocks. With their dependencies, the Amirantes and many others, the administrative area comprises nearly 100 small islands.

The Seychelles proper lie 750 miles directly northeast of the northern tip of Madagascar and almost 1,000 miles northeast of Zanzibar. The names of the individual islands frequently denote their outstanding quality which appealed to early explorers, such as Silhouette, Curieuse (curious), La Digne (the dam), and Felicite (blessed). The name of the group, however, is not a variation of "sea shells," as might be suspected, but was given in honor of a finance minister under Louis XV.

Uninhabited When Discovered

Its dense jungles, curious plant specimens, great trees festooned with trailers, its orchids and ferns and begonias, green coral reefs and equable climate, all make the Seychelles group altogether as delightful as the South Sea Islands, which have been sought after and often described in recent years. One reason they have not attracted globe trotters and adventurous spirits is that they lack the picturesque natives of Tahiti or the Marquesas.

When the Portuguese found the islands, about the time America was discovered, they were uninhabited—almost a unique condition for land units of their size and habitability. Eleven years before the Pilgrims set foot on Plymouth

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go incognito to shops of the meat dealers and bakers and ask their prices. If he found them too high he would order their stock given to the poor and the merchants punished.

Spires of City Like Spears of Host

At a time when the memoirs of neighbor nations are engaged largely with intrigue, the musty records of Prague disclose theological disputation. It thrashed out its religious questions long before Wittenberg and Geneva emerged into theological prominence.

In 1278 nearly a hundred church bells tolled for the funeral of Ottakar. To-day the spires of the city look like the pikes and spears of a warrior host; church domes suggest the round-topped helmets of Swedish invaders.

One of the less known and most interesting sights of the city is the Jewish graveyard. Here 12,000 or more moss-grown stones crowd each other, for the cemetery became so congested that bodies of later burials are on top of the earlier ones. Many stones have symbols of the tribe to which the buried person belonged—two hands in a gesture of blessing mark the tribe of Aaron, a pitcher denotes the Levites, a cluster of grapes the House of Israel.

Prague at Home Is Known as Praha

There is a tradition that Jews settled on the site of Prague before the crucifixion, hence they had no hand in the slaying of Christ and are peculiarly blessed. The explanation probably was invented to account for the exceptional treatment accorded the Jews of Prague when their kinsmen were being persecuted elsewhere.

Czechoslovakia now knows Prague as Praha, and the Moldau as the Vltava. The difficulty of giving new names to geographic entities which are famous in history, song and story would deter a less persistent people. One of the most notable victories of the Czechs is their lingual triumph in resurrecting their language after centuries of disuse. It is acclaimed a unique feat in world lexicography.

It was undertaken by a group of scholars, and achieved in the face of the most formidable of all obstacles—social contempt, because those who talked Bohemian were set down as peasants.

Crowing Cock Prague's Timepiece

It has been said that Prague resisted Germanization only to yield to the faults of her friends. But the visitor is deeply impressed by the adoption of card index files and typewriters even though the passing hours are marked by a crowing cock and the parade of the Apostles on the famous astronomical clock, dating back two years before Columbus discovered America.

Nor can anyone think Prague's musical taste is decadent who listens to a concert, probably featuring Bohemia's native Dvorak and Smetana, in the great open-air theater at Sharka, a few miles out from the city. Here a natural wooded background forms the setting for music and drama, and in the latter entertainment Shakespeare is a favorite.

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Vanilla Sodas from a Tropic Orchid

JOHN CHINAMAN plunged on an orchid and Detroit has sold another automobile, perhaps two or three, all because of a flurry in vanilla out in Oceania.

When the traders recently skyrocketed vanilla bean "stock" in the island of Tahiti they were gambling on crop failures thousands of miles from Papeete, hoping to make their fortunes in the flavoring market.

Out of more than 6,000 species of orchids, the vanilla is the only variety of wide utilitarian value to mankind, unless decorations for formal evening gowns are considered useful. Blooms of the vanilla vine are ugly ducklings of the orchid tribes, but the juices of their fruit have long been the master touch of favorite cakes, candies and wafers. Since ice-cream sodas were invented vanilla has also occupied a prominent place in thousands of American soft-drink shops.

Mexico is the home of vanilla, but man's hand has now scattered the vines farther than could ocean currents. Vanilla flavored chocolate is far older than our age; older than white civilization in the New World. It was a favorite of the Aztecs of Mexico before the Spaniards came.

Spaniards Introduce Vanilla and Chocolate

When the Spaniards learned about chocolate from conquered tribes and introduced it to Europe, they introduced vanilla at the same time.

Even today the vanilla vine grows wild in the tropic forests of Tehuantepec and other parts of southern Mexico's east coast. Although some of the vanilla of commerce comes from the native forests, it is an inferior product. Best grades of vanilla in Mexico, and from other parts of the world, come from cultivated farms. The districts of Papantla and Misantla, in the State of Vera Cruz, are the principal sources of vanilla from Mexico. Exports of the flavoring from these districts go chiefly to the United States.

Vanilla is a step-child in Tahiti. Ordinarily copra and pearls and "atmosphere" for American novels are its chief stock in trade. But a certain shrewd Chinese merchant of Tahiti bought in at a low price some months ago the vanilla grown from stock imported from Mexico. Then the price rose and John Chinaman is now riding proudly over the few available miles of road in a Detroit motor car. Envious fellow-merchants plunged after him, arguing that poor vanilla crops in Reunion, Madagascar and Java and disturbances wrought by the revolution in Mexico limited the supply and boosted prices.

Send Roots Into Air, Too

In the Seychelles, British outposts off East Africa, vanilla vines are trained over small trees planted about nine feet apart. In some places the planters make the soil do double duty by growing vanilla vines on coffee trees. The vanilla vine grows rapidly and takes no chances, since it sends rootlets into the warm, humid air, as well as into the ground. Pruned branches on which the flowers appear are from four to six feet long and hang to within a foot of the ground. The vines bear to advantage after the third year, reaching maximum production about the seventh.

Thirty long pods are usually allowed to each plant. They mature in six weeks, becoming yellow. Before the pods are marketed they are cured to develop

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Rock an English vessel stopped there; but it was nearly a century and a half after that the French settled there and claimed them.

Their population today consists largely of French Creoles, freed slaves imported from Africa and settlers from Mauritius, a few Indians from Malabar and a few Chinese. Beginning with secret spice groves to combat the existing Dutch monopoly, their economic development turned in recent years to vanilla, then to coconuts, which still is the principal product, and within the present century experiments were begun with rubber. On some of the smaller islands the natives eke out a living by hunting birds' eggs and scraping guano off the rocks to sell to the plantations of Mahe. The islands now support about 20,000 people, of whom fewer than 1,000 are white.

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COPRA IS A CHIEF PRODUCT IN THE SEYCHELLES

Copra of commerce is made by splitting the coconuts and sun-drying the pieces. The coconut is nature's most precious gift to tropic islands. Green coconuts furnish milk and meat like the white of soft-boiled eggs. Dried and polished shells make water bottles and oil flasks. The fiber of the husk serves as cord to bind rafters of huts and timbers of canoes (see Bulletin No. 2).

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Peru Celebrates Its Own "Yorktown"

GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING has been appointed to represent the United States in Peru at the centenary celebration of the Battle of Ayacucho. When General Sucre there defeated the Spanish Viceroy he ended definitely Spain's power in the old home of the Incas. That Peruvian "Yorktown" was important to all South America, for Peru was the center of Spanish might in the New World colonies.

Ayacucho was truly a battle of the skies. It was fought in southern Peru near the old Inca stronghold Cuzco, and at an elevation nearly twice that of Mt. Mitchell, the highest Appalachian peak. But Peru is not all mountains.

Most countries, unless they are continental in extent, must be content with a small range of climatic conditions; but Peru, occupying less than a tenth of South America, has every climate under the sky, together with many of the products that go with them. It has the sand dunes of the Sahara; the fertile, sun-bathed, irrigated valleys of California; the dry grazing lands of Australia; the productive mountain valleys and uplands of Kashmir; the snowy peaks of Switzerland; and the tropical jungles of Central Africa and Brazil.

The Country Shaped by the Andes

Much of Peru is occupied by the towering Andes, with few passes less than 15,000 feet high, and with numerous peaks exceeding 21,000 feet. These great ramparts are chiefly responsible for the diversity of Peru's climatic conditions. They wring the moisture out of Atlantic winds and so create the tropical jungles that stretch from their bases toward the interior of the continent; thrust slopes and plateaus up into the cool regions of the upper air; and cut off the Pacific coast section from the moisture-laden winds, making much of it a desert.

Although the strip of Peru between the Pacific and the western foothills of the Andes is devoid of rain and largely desert, many streams from the mountains traverse this region, and the relatively narrow valleys, irrigated from their waters, constitute the most fertile land of the country. There grow cotton, sugar-cane, corn, vineyards and olive trees, various fruits, and practically all other products of the semi-tropical regions. From the most remote part of Peru, on the east side of the Andes, come the products with which Americans are perhaps most familiar: quinine, cocaine, rubber and cocoa.

Indians Largest Element in Population

Isolated on the Pacific coast of South America before the building of the Panama Canal, Peru is not well known to the people of the United States. In many cases, no doubt, it is looked upon as a small patch of territory. In reality it is only a little less than a third the area of the United States, exclusive of Alaska, and is larger than the latter territory. It has a sea coast of approximately 1,300 miles, practically equal to the Pacific coast line of the United States south of Canada.

If Peru were laid down on the surface of the United States so that its southernmost point met the southernmost point of Texas, its northeastern corner would lie near Peoria, Ill., and its northwestern extremity near Cheyenne, Wyo. The rough triangle would cover practically all of Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas,

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the aroma and flavor throughout. After several immersions in hot water and subsequent sweating, crystals of vanillin appear on the outside. The pods become a rich brown when finally prepared for commerce.

Pollination by Hand Necessary

Germany must be taken into consideration by the Chinese traders in the Tahiti vanilla market, for vanilla, like vinegar and certain flavors, perfumes, and spices, can be made synthetically. Quantities have been produced by German chemists and put on the market as vanillin. Their product was first extracted from oil of cloves and later by electrolysis from sugar.

On a plantation pollination by hand is practically a necessity because of the complex method of fertilization nature has given the vanilla orchid. Characteristic of orchids is the long tube in which honey is secreted. Bees and insects attracted by the bright colors alight and crawl toward the treasure. In reaching down, the insect's back automatically comes in contact with the pollen-laden stamens, sweeping off some of the yellow powder. Then a curious thing happens. Once an insect has brushed off the pollen, the stamens automatically fold apart, revealing the pistil. The next insect arriving with yellow pollen on his back from another bloom deposits his burden on the exposed pistil, taking his pay for the labor, meantime, from the honey cup.

Bulletin No. 3, December 8, 1924.

Form for Renewal of Bulletin Requests

Many requests for the GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETIN were made for the year ending with this issue. If you desire the Bulletins continued kindly notify The Society promptly. The attached form may be used:

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Sagan: A Real Estate Offer to Germany

SAGAN is up for sale—castle, title, 100,000 acres, 65,000 tenants and all. But the Duke of Sagan has requested the German Government to buy in his principality to prevent its purchase by a foreigner. Sagan is reported to be held for $8,000,000.

Sagan now has no separate existence save in so far as it gives a princely title to its owner, but a century and a half ago it was a sort of a very diminutive Bavaria or Saxony, an integral principality of Germany. The origin and fate of this little "state," which lies about 100 miles southeast of Berlin, illustrate the history of the many small domains of Europe to which reference is constantly being made in world news.

For a long time the principle of the inheritance of properties and titles by the eldest son was not followed in many of the German principalities. On the death of a ruler his domains were divided among his sons. After a few centuries of this the old empire was peppered with little fragments of once extensive territories. Scores of these claimed to have no allegiance to any other ruler than the emperor.

Sagan Caught in Napoleon's Reorganization

The large State of Silesia was divided up in this way and the little principality of Sagan, about five times as large as the District of Columbia, became one of its parts, breaking off in 1397 from the principality of Glogau. Sagan's princes continued to rule over the local affairs of their petty domain until Napoleon's victories and reorganizations brushed away much of the political dead wood left over from the Middle Ages.

In forming his Confederation of the Rhine from conquered German States, Napoleon ordered that many of the little principalities should thenceforth be a part of the large state through local states or dukedoms. This merging of the petty states with larger ones was known as "mediatization."

Scores of princely families, including that of Sagan, were forced to the procedure, much against their wills. The "mediatized" nobles flooded the Congress of Vienna with petitions that their old status be restored, but that body confirmed the action already taken and even extended it. One concession made to the "dethroned" nobles went a long way toward reconciling them. Their ranks were maintained and with them the right to marry into royal families.

Combination of Old and New

The town of Sagan, former capital of the principality of Sagan, has a population of about 15,000, while the territory of the old principality has about 65,000 inhabitants. The town is a typical German combination of medieval walls and buildings, and modern industry. Near its center is the old palace of Sagan's rulers, set in a park. Sagan has been sold several times in the past.

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half of Nebraska, parts of Illinois, Missouri, Colorado, Iowa and South Dakota, and fragments of New Mexico and Wyoming.

Peru, no less than the United States, contains a mixture of races. The total population is not accurately known, but is probably more than 3,000,000. Most of the population is made up of the civilized Indians, numbering about 1,800,000, who live principally in upland plains and on mountain slopes. The number of wild Indians in the tropical jungles is not accurately known. In addition to the Indians there are large numbers of mixed Indian and Spanish stock. These, together with the relatively few inhabitants of pure Spanish descent, have largely controlled the political fortunes of Peru.

Lima Headquarters of Spanish Government

The complexity of the racial make-up of Peru has been increased by the importation in the past of large numbers of negro laborers, and later of Chinese coolies. These have intermarried with each other and with the Indians, bringing about the existence in parts of the country of unusual hybrid types.

Peru was the last of the South American colonies to throw off the yoke of Spain. Lima was the seat of government for the administration of the entire continent. The viceroy maintained there a court which was a faithful copy on a minor scale of the court at Madrid, and kept many of the Spanish nobility about him. Monarchial sentiment was strong and the few patriots who wished to follow the examples of other colonies and establish their independence were unable to make headway. Finally San Martin, an Argentinian general, persuaded his own countrymen and the Chileans that their independence could be made safe only by driving the Spaniards from Peru. He spent many years in his labors to liberate the Peruvians. He succeeded in entering Lima with his army on July 9, 1821, and on July 28 issued the Peruvian proclamation of independence. He was made Protector and served until a Peruvian Congress was elected.

But soon other disorders occurred and in 1824 the Spanish Viceroy, attempting to regain control, was defeated at Ayacucho.

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WHY OLD GERMAN HOUSES ARE HUGE

The town house of a German burgher served three purposes, shelter for his stock, home for his family and barn for his hay. Hay is being stored in the loft of the 200-year-old house in the photograph. The ground floor was generally reserved for stock and the next two floors for the family.